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7-29-1971

Newsletter - 1971-07-29

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FOR RELEASE: 29 July 1971

92-290

FROM: Kika de la Garza

WASHINGTON, D. C. -- Americans have become greatly concerned about the shocking spread of drug abuse among members of the armed forces. The House has now passed a bill, the Veterans Drug Treatment Act, which will get the Veterans Administration with its extensive medical facilities involved in the treatment and rehabilitation of military personnel and ex-servicemen with drug problems.

The legislation establishes an orderly procedure for the Veterans Administration to cooperate with the military services in treating drug-addicted personnel. It also provides authority for the Federal courts to commit addicts to VA custody, and any veteran will be admitted regardless of the nature of his discharge. This provision is designed to clear up the confusion about honorable and dishonorable discharges and eligibility for treatment for drug addiction. Now any serviceman or ex-serviceman can be treated regardless of the type of discharge he holds or any legal problems he may have as a result of violation of other laws.

This is important. The procedure dispels the thought that VA treatment for drug addiction is a benefit or a reward for service. Obviously, it is not. Treatment is not a part of a veterans benefit program, but is in the general public interest and represents an effort to protect society from crime and abuse by drug users.

The Veterans Drug Treatment Act was presented to the House by our fellow-Texan, Chairman Olin Teague of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee. ~~Speaker~~ Carl Albert issued a statement commending Chairman Teague and his committee, saying they "deserve the gratitude of the entire nation for the timely reporting of the measure."

* * *

TO PROVIDE JOBS -- Another legislative measure in which I have taken a special interest, the Emergency Employment Act of 1971, has been signed into law by President Nixon. This law will bring about the creation of more than 150,000 additional jobs for the unemployed and underemployed. The jobs provided will be in the field of public service, in such areas as environment, health, education, public safety, crime prevention, prisons, transportation, park maintenance, recreation, rural development and sanitation.

In signing the Emergency Employment Act, President Nixon stated: "A very important feature of the act is that the jobs will be 'transitional.'" This means that they will lead people into permanent jobs, and not be a substitute for them. The employment will be real and steady; it will not be a dead-end entrapment in permanent

public subsidy. Local programs will be designed with a view toward career advancement and toward development of new non-subsidized careers for the worker."

Returning veterans will be favored by the act, and persons with little or no training, such as unskilled youth, will also have a chance to get jobs through this measure. A special program is authorized to provide additional assistance for local areas which may suffer from unemployment of six percent or more for three consecutive months.

* * *

LIGHTED STREETS IN D. C. -- From time to time I have written in this report and spoken in the House about the feasibility of returning the streets of the Nation's Capital to the people through better lighting at night. Proof that this plan works is now available.

Four sections of Washington with the highest crime rates were illuminated with high-pressure sodium lamps, the world's most efficient producer of light. Within three months, police analysis shows, crime in these areas was down thirty-four per cent. Merchants say there is more night-time traffic. More people are looking in the shop windows. People are gaining confidence that they can safely go into the streets at night, and of course the fact that more people are on the streets and sidewalks is in itself a deterrent to crime.

It seems clear that better lighting will give the streets back to the people -- to whom they rightfully belong. I hope the idea will spread to other cities.

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RURAL DEVELOPMENT -- South Texans have a continuing interest in rural development programs carried on by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. These programs have the purpose of providing the people of rural America with better housing, dependable water supplies, improved community facilities, and increased job opportunities.

A report from the department brings the information that 1970 was the first billion dollar years of loans in the rural housing program. More than 94,000 families of low and moderate income received \$1.06 billion in loans to build, buy, or improve their homes.

* * *

VISITORS -- Visiting my office this week were Mrs. Ofilia Rodriguez, of Edinburg; Mr. and Mrs. Neal Bonner and their children, Pace, Andy, Teri and Chipper Bonner, of Harlingen; Mr. and Mrs. Walter Haugarth and their daughter, Cami, and Miss Judy Flendt, all of Mission; and Mr. Arnoldo Cantu, of San Juan.

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